

## Message Text

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70

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 NEA-11 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 TRSE-00 SAJ-01 OMB-01 ACDA-19 DRC-01

EB-11 COME-00 FEA-02 INT-08 SCI-06 /177 W

----- 051487

P R 221850Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9674

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

USMISSION NATO

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS UNN

USMISSION USUN NY

USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 0393

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, BE, US

SUBJECT: VIEWS ON GOVERNMENT CRISIS

REF: A.BRUSSELS 340 B. BRUSSELS 127 JANUARY 10, 1973

1. SUMMARY. GASTON EYSKENS GAVE ME HIS VIEW JANUARY  
22 THAT THE OUTCOME OF THE KING'S CURRENT CONSULTATIONS  
IS LIKELY TO BE A DECISION TO DISSOLVE PARLIAMENT AND  
TO HOLD EARLY ELECTIONS (WITHIN FORTY DAYS THEREAFTER).  
EYSKENS ATTRIBUTES THE PRESENT CRISIS TO THE SELF-  
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SERVING BUT, HE THINKS, ACCURATE CALCULATION OF ANDRE

COOLS, SOCIALIST PARTY (PSB) CO-PRESIDENT AND DOMINANT LEADER, THAT NEW ELECTIONS WOULD HELP THE PSB STRENGTHEN ITS POSITION AND RETURN THUS FORTIFIED TO RENEWED OCCUPANCY OF THE PREMIERSHIP, PERHAPS EVEN BY COOLS HIMSELF.

2. THE TREND THAT COOLS SEEKS TO EXPLIT IS THE INCREASED VULNERABILITY TO RADICALIZATION OF OPINION IN ECONOMICALLY STAGNANT WALLONIA, WHERE THERE IS WIDESPREAD DISSATISFACTION WITH THE PACE OF INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION UNDER FREE ENTERPRISE AUSPICES. THE EMBASSY SHARES THIS ASSESSMENT, BUT NOTES THAT THIS VULNERABILITY AFFECTS NOT ONLY WALLONIA BUT FLANDERS AND THE OTHER TRADITIONAL PARTIES AS WELL, THE LONGER-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THIS TREND ARE MORE NEGATIVE THAN POSITIVE AS FAR AS US INTERESTS ARE CONCERNED. IN THE SHORTER TERM, THE EMBASSY ANTICIPATES NO SIGNIFICANT HARM TO US INTERESTS, WHETHER IN INVESTMENTS, BILATERAL RELATIONS, OR NATO AND EEC POLICIES. END SUMMARY.

3. I HAVE FOUND EYSKENS 5 TIMES PRIME MINISTER AND THE MOST RESPECTED POLITICAL FIGURE IN BELGIUM TODAY A FRANK AND ASTUTE COMMENTATOR ON THE BELGIAN POLITICAL SCENE, AS WILL BE SEEN FROM THE RECORD OF MY DISCUSSIONS WITH HIM DURING THE GOVERNMENT CRISIS A YEAR AGO (BRUSSELS 127). IN ADDITION TO THE VIEWS SUMMARIZED ABOVE, EYSKENS, LONG A LEADING FIGURE IN THE FLEMISH CATHOLIC PARTY (CVP), TELLS ME HE ATTRIBUTES THE SUCCESS OF COOLS TO THE INEFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP DEMONSTRATED BY LEBURTON AS PRIME MINISTER, AS WELL AS TO THE TEMPTING OPPORTUNITY OFFERED BY THE UNEXPECTEDLY ABRUPT COLLAPSE OF THE IBRAMCO DEAL.

4. EYSKENS ANTICIPATES THAT HE WILL BE CONSULTED INFORMALLY BY THE KING. EYSKENS INTENDS TO ADVISE THE KING, WHOM HE ADMIRES AND RESPECTS, AGAINST AGREEING TO ANY PROPOSAL FOR THE FORMATION OF A MINORITY GOVERNMENT (E.G. CATHOLIC OR CATHOLIC/LIBERAL) WHICH REMAINS AN ALTERNATIVE TO NEW ELECTIONS OR TO A SOCIALIST REVERSAL ON PARTICIPATION IN A NEW COALITION TO LAST UNTIL THE ELECTIONS ORIGINALLY EXPECTED IN EARLY 1975. THE FORMATION OF A MINORITY GOVERNMENT, I.E. WITHOUT THE SOCIALISTS, WOULD EXPOSE THE KING TO SOCIALIST CHARGES OF PARTIALITY.

5. EYSKENS ALSO CONSIDERS IT POLITICALLY UNWISE FOR THE  
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CATHOLICS (PSC/CVP) AND LIBERALS (PLP/PVV) TO ATTEMPT TO SET UP A MAJORITY COALITION GOVERNMENT BY COMBINING WITH THE "ODDS AND ENDS" REPRESENTED BY THE LINGUISTIC/FEDERALIST PARTIES (FDF/FW AND VOLKSUNIE). THE MAIN PROBLEM WOULD BE THE HIGH DEGREE OF INSTABILITY OF SUCH A COALITION AND ITS INABILITY TO CARRY THROUGH ON REGIONAL DECENTRALIZATION.

6. ALTHOUGH THE CURRENT VICE PRIME MINISTER LEO TINDEMANS

(CVP) IS TOUTED BY SOME OBSERVERS AS A POSSIBLE PREMIER, EYSKENS DISAGREES. TINDEMANS, HE SAYS IS NOT TOUGH ENOUGH. (EYSKENS WAS UNDERSTANDABLY HARDER ON THE SOCIALIST MACHINATIONS OF COOLS THAN ON THE INEFFECTUAL LEADERSHIPS OF THE CVP AND PSC).

7. NOT SURPRISINGLY FOR A FLEMISH CATHOLIC, EYSKENS ATTRIBUTES THE FAILURE OF WALLONIA TO KEEP PACE WITH FLANDERS TO THE "INFERIOR WALLOON WORK ETHIC". IF, AS EYSKENS FORESEES, COOLS SUCCEEDS IN EXPLITING WALLOON DISSATISFACTIONS AND IN STRENGTHENING THE PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION OF THE PSB, THE FLEMISH REACTION TO PSB RADICALIZATION WOULD WORK FURTHER TO DIVIDE THE WALLOON AND FLEMISH REGIONS OF BELGIUM. EYSKENS DOES NOT RULE OUT THAT, OVER TIME SUCH DIVISIVE IDEOLOGICAL TRENDS MIGHT CULMINATE IN THE BREAKUP OF BELGIUM INTO TWO NATIONS.

8. EYSKENS SEES THE YOUNG, UPCOMING SOCIALIST LEADERSHIP AS BEMUSED BY THE ALLEGED VIRTUES OF THE YUGOSLAV MODEL OF SOCIALISM.

9. EYSKENS SAYS THAT THE EC VICE PRESIDENT FOR ENERGY MATTERS HENRI SIMONET, REMAINS ACTIVE IN PSB POLITICS AND HAS AN EXCELLENT CHANCE, IN COMPETITION WITH COOLS, FOR POWER IN THE PSB AND EVENTUAL OCCUPANCY OF THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP(EVEN THOUGH HE IS NOT CURRENTLY A DEPUTY).

10. COMMENT: THERE IS LITTLE DISAGREEMENT WITH THE VIEW THAT THE PRIME ARCHITECT OF THE COLLAPSE OF THE COALITION GOVERNMENT ON JANUARY 18 WAS ANDRE COOLS. OPINIONS DIFFER, HOWEVER, ON THE DEGREE OF BLAME DUE THE FLEMISH CATHOLICS (CVP) FOR PLAYING INTO THE HANDS OF COOLS BY FOOT-DRAGGING ON AN OIL REFINERY PROJECT THE IRANIANS WOULD HAVE BACKED OUT OF IN ANY CASE. ALTHOUGH THE VICE PREMIER TINDEMANS (CVP)  
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HAS INSISTED THAT ALL GOVERNMENT PARTIES AGREED TO BACK THE IBRAMCO OIL REFINERY PROJECT, SO LONG AS ELEMENTARY AND REASONABLE CLARIFICATION ON PRICE AND QUANTITIES COULD BE OBTAINED FROM THE IRANIANS, THE FLEMISH CATHOLICS WILL BE EASILY BLAMED IN WALLONIA FOR FRUSTRATING THE PROJECT BY INSISTING ON CONDITIONS THE IRANIANS WERE MOST UNLIKELY TO WISH EVEN TO DISCUSS, GIVEN THE CHANGES IN THE WORLD ENERGY SITUATION SINCE THE BELGIAN SOCIALIST PARTY (UNDER SIMONET AND LEBURTON) FIRST NEGOTIATED THE IBRAMCO PROJECT.

10. IN THE EMBASSY VIEW, IF THE KING DECIDES THAT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE RESOLUTION OF THE CRISIS IS IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST, HIS DECISION IS LIKELY TO BE, AS

EYSKENS EXPECTS, IN FAVOR OF ELECTIONS. THE NON-  
SOCIALIST PARTIES ARE LESS INTERESTED IN EARLY ELECTIONS  
THAN THE PSB, EVEN THOUGH THIS IS A POSITION THEY  
CANNOT PUBLICLY AVOW. BY ONE MEANS OR ANOTHER, THEY CAN BE  
EXPECTED TO TRY TO STALL OFF ELECTIONS AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.  
THEY WILL ARGUE THAT A REASONABLE ELECTORAL  
CONSULTATION CAN BE HELD ONLY AFTER THERE HAS BEEN  
TIME TO CONSIDER A  
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## Message Attributes

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